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ABSTRACT

This speech, before a Canadian conference on curriculum, instruction, and leadership, discusses the role Canada's public schools and universities will play in making that country internationally competitive, culturally distinctive, and socially humane for the 21st century. By reviewing the environmental and organizational contexts of public schools, by arguing for local-level control, and by describing the nonrational "garbage can" organizational form that typifies Canadian universities, this address suggests college-school collaborations to resolve short- and long-term educational problems including but not limited to school funding, decentralization, curriculum, instruction, and leadership in Canadian education. The sponsors of the conference included the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Canadian Association of School Administrators, Canadian Education Association, Canadian School Trustees' Association, Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies, Council of Ministers of Education (Canada), and Association Canadienne d'Education de Langue Francaise. (JAM)

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WHY SHOULD UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALL THE FUN?

By

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Presented at the International "Curriculum at the Centre" Conference

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WHY SHOULD UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALL THE FUN?

I WAS FLATTERED A LOT AND FRIGHTENED A BIT BY THE INVITATION TO PRESENT YOUR KEYNOTE PLENARY ADDRESS HERE THIS EVENING. THE FLATTERY HAD TO DO WITH THE STATURE AND BOLDNESS OF THIS CONFERENCE. I CAN RECALL NO TIME DURING THE PAST QUARTER-CENTURY WHEN EDUCATION IN CANADA HAS BEEN SO DIRECTLY CONFRONTED BY SUCH COMPLEX AND SERIOUS CHALLENGES, SO DESPERATELY LOOKED TO AS THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN WHETHER OR NOT OUR COUNTRY WILL "MAKE IT" AS AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE, CULTURALLY DISTINCTIVE, AND SOCIALLY HUMANE NATION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, OR SO CRITICALLY EXAMINED UNDER THE MERCILESS MICROSCOPE OF PUBLIC AND MEDIA ATTENTION, AS IS CLEARLY THE CASE RIGHT NOW. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, ONE MIGHT UNDERSTAND AN INCLINATION TO HEAD FOR COVER, TO KEEP LOW AND "PLAY IT COOL" UNTIL THE REVEALING GLARE OF THIS DEMANDING SEARCHLIGHT PASSED ON TO OTHER TARGETS. YET YOU HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO HIDE YOURSELVES AND NOT TO CONCEAL YOUR WORK, YOUR OPINIONS, OR YOUR FEELINGS - BUT RATHER TO IGNITE YOUR OWN SPOTLIGHT AND ILLUMINATE THE VERY CORE OF WHAT YOU DO IN ALL OF ITS CONFUSING COMPLEXITY AND IMMENSE COMPREHENSIVENESS. I COMMEND YOU FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEDICATION, CONCERN, AND COURAGE - AND I AM PROUD TO HAVE THIS CHANCE TO PLAY A SMALL PART IN SUCH A BRAVE ENDEAVOUR.

I'M ALSO IMPRESSED WITH THE BROAD RANGE OF PARTICIPATION THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GENERATE AMONG SO MANY SEGMENTS OF OUR SOCIAL SYSTEM THAT HAVE A DIRECT CONCERN WITH EDUCATION IN THIS COUNTRY, AND THE FACT THAT SEVEN MAJOR NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COOPERATE SO WELL IN SUCH AN

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AMBITIOUS TASK IS QUITE AMAZING, AND VERY ENCOURAGING. IT REMINDS ME SOMEWHAT OF THE EQUALLY AMBITIOUS NATIONAL FORUM ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION HELD IN SASKATOON A YEAR-AND-A-HALF AGO, AN EVENT WHICH I SUSPECT PROVIDED PART OF THE STIMULATION FOR THIS CONFERENCE. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE, HOWEVER: THAT ONE WAS INITIATED IN LARGE PART BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHEREAS THIS ONE TO YOUR CREDIT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN INITIATED MAINLY BY THE PRACTITIONERS THEMSELVES. PERHAPS YOU ALREADY KNOW SOMETHING THAT MANY AT THE POST-SECONDARY FORUM DIDN'T LEARN UNTIL AFTER THE FACT: ONE CANNOT SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR GOVERNMENTS TO IMPLEMENT MOST OF THE GOOD IDEAS THAT COME OUT OF CONFERENCES SUCH AS THESE; THE CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENTS TO DO SO IS SEVERELY LIMITED BY THEIR VERY NATURE, AND IT IS NAIVE TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE. MANY OF US AT UNIVERSITIES, IN OUR NAIVETY, DIDN'T REALIZE UNTIL MUCH LATER THAT IF ACTION OF REAL VALUE IS TO RESULT FROM SUCH A CONFERENCE, WE ARE THE ONES WHO ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE THAT ACTION; WE ARE THE ONES WITH THE AUTHORITY AND EXPERTISE TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN IN OUR OWN INSTITUTIONS AND IT IS UNREASONABLE, UNFAIR, AND UNWISE TO LAY THAT RESPONSIBILITY ON GOVERNMENTS. SO LET THAT HARD-LEARNED LESSON OF OURS SERVE AS A CAUTION TO YOU: THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE MEASURED LARGELY BY WHAT YOU DO AS TEACHERS, TRUSTEES, AND ADMINISTRATORS WHEN YOU GO HOME TO YOUR OWN SCHOOLS, BOARDS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY - NOT BY WHAT YOU WAIT TO HAVE DONE FOR YOU IN LEGISLATURES, MINISTRIES, AND DEPARTMENTS THAT ARE INEVITABLY REMOTE FROM WHERE THE REAL ACTION IS IN EDUCATION.

THE QUALM OF FEAR THAT I FELT IN BEING INVITED TO JOIN YOU

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HERE THIS EVENING AROSE FROM MY RECOGNITION THAT I TOO AM REMOVED FROM THE ACTION AND THAT I DON'T KNOW MUCH IN A FIRST-HAND WAY ABOUT THE TOPICS ON OUR PROGRAM THAT DEAL QUITE DIRECTLY WITH MATTERS WHICH MANY OF YOU FACE EVERY DAY. WHILE TWO OF THE MOST PROFESSIONALLY REWARDING YEARS OF MY LIFE WERE SPENT TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL IN B.C., AND WHILE I HAVE ENJOYED SOME LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY AND TEACH IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION IN ONTARIO AND SASKATCHEWAN, MOST OF MY CAREER DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. SINCE THE CONFERENCE PLANNERS WERE AWARE THAT I KNOW MORE AT AN INTIMATE LEVEL ABOUT UNIVERSITIES THAN I DO ABOUT SCHOOLS, THEY INVITED ME TO ADDRESS YOU AS SOMETHING OF AN OUTSIDER OR FRINGE FIGURE - AND I'M COMFORTABLE WITH THAT ROLE (AND ALSO, I MIGHT ADD, WITH THE BROAD DEFINITION OF CURRICULUM THAT HAS BEEN ADOPTED FOR THS CONFERENCE, AND WITH THE FREEDOM THAT I'VE BEEN GRANTED TO CHOOSE MY OWN SUBJECT WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE CONFERENCE'S OBJECTIVES).

SO I'LL SPEAK TO YOU AS SOMETHING OF AN OUTSIDER, EVEN THOUGH I DO NOT CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE COMPLETELY DISCONNECTED FROM YOUR CONCERNS AND INTERESTS - OR EVEN OBJECTIVE ABOUT THEM. THE VIEWS I'LL EXPRESS WILL BE LARGELY PERSONAL AND I SHOULD WARN YOU THAT MY BASE AS A DENIZEN OF THE UNIVERSITY WILL BECOME QUITE CLEAR AS WE PROCEED. I WILL NOT BE SO PRESUMPTUOUS AS TO TRY AND TELL YOU IN SPECIFIC TERMS WHAT YOU MUST DO TO RESOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS. I'M SURE THAT I DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND OR EVEN RECOGNIZE ALL OF YOUR PROBLEMS, LET ALONE HAVE SURE-FIRE SOLUTIONS TO THEM. BUT PERHAPS I CAN OFFER A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE AND A FEW IDEAS THAT MAY

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BE HELPFUL. I HOPE SO, EVEN THOUGH I'LL UNDOUBTEDLY MAKE SOME NEW ENEMIES BECAUSE OF WHAT I HAVE TO SAY; BUT THAT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR UNIVERSITY PEOPLE.

I'LL FOLLOW THE GENERAL FORMAT OF THE CONFERENCE BY SAYING SOMETHING FIRST ABOUT THE REALITIES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS OF SCHOOLS, THEN I'LL TALK ABOUT RESPONSES BY REFERRING TO A PARTICULAR EXAMPLE WITH WHICH I'M FAMILIAR, AND FINALLY I'LL RAISE SOME QUESTIONS AND MENTION SOME IMPLICATIONS THAT RELATE TO RESPONSIBILITIES. AND TO SET A POSITIVE TONE FOR WHAT IS TO COME, LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT, IN GENERAL, I LIKE THE PRODUCTS OF YOUR SCHOOLS THAT I MEET ON OUR CAMPUS. I FIND MOST OF TODAY'S ENTERING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO BE THOUGHTFUL AND CONCERNED, TO BE GENERALLY COURTEOUS AND CONSTRUCTIVELY CRITICAL, TO BE SYMPATHETIC WITH THE UNDERPRIVILEGED ALTHOUGH WORRIED ABOUT THEIR OWN FUTURES, AND TO BE EXPRESSIVE IN INTERESTING WAYS ALTHOUGH NOT ALWAYS AS ARTICULATE AS MANY OF US WOULD WISH THEM TO BE. AND CERTAINLY IT IS PATENTLY CLEAR THAT OUR COUNTRY IS FULL OF RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS AND SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WHOSE FORMATION TOOK PLACE IN YOUR SCHOOLS. SO LET'S RECOGNIZE THE PROGRESS THAT WE'VE MADE AND STRIVE TO IMPROVE UPON IT; THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO GIVE UP AND FALL BACKWARD. BUT IF WE ARE TO PRESS ONWARD, IN WHAT DIRECTION SHOULD WE MOVE? LET ME TAKE A GROPING SORT OF STAB AT ANSWERING THAT QUESTION.

The Environmental and Organizational Contexts of Schools

IT IS NO SECRET TO ME, OR PROBABLY TO MOST CANADIANS, THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT IN WHICH OUR SCHOOLS MUST OPERATE TODAY IS CLOSE TO OVERWHELMING. IT IS DEMANDED THAT YOU SOLVE OUR HEALTH AND

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SOCIAL PROBLEMS BY PREVENTING AIDS AND UNDERNOURISHMENT, BY ELIMINATING CHILD AND DRUG ABUSE, AND BY REMOVING SEXISM AND RACISM FROM HUMAN BEHAVIOUR. IT IS DEMANDED THAT YOU CONFINE ALL STUDENTS IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM UNTIL THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN, AND IF THEY DON'T WANT TO STAY YOU GET THE BLAME. IT IS DEMANDED THAT YOUR GRADUATES BE INSTANTLY EMPLOYABLE IN A HIGH-TECH MARKETPLACE WITH BASIC SKILLS WHOSE DEFINITION KEEPS CHANGING AND/OR THAT THEY BE FULLY PREPARED TO GRAPPLE INTELLECTUALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY WITH THE HIGH-ORDER MATHEMATICS AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS THAT "TURN THE CRANKS" OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS. YOU ARE BLAMED FOR ILLITERACY AND ILLNESS, POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT, DOMESTIC INHUMANITY, INTERNATIONAL UNCOMPETITIVENESS, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION, AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY. IN SOME WAYS THIS IS GREAT: WHEN YOU BEGAN IN THIS BUSINESS YOU PROBABLY HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU WERE SO ALL-POWERFUL. BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE IN IT, YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT.

OBVIOUSLY, THEN, THERE HAVE TO BE SOME LIMITS SET ON WHAT WE CAN REASONABLY EXPECT SCHOOLS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR. CERTAINLY SCHOOLS CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN HELPING TO RESOLVE SOME OF THESE BROAD CONTEXTUAL PROBLEMS IN OUR SOCIAL SYSTEM, BUT JUST AS CERTAINLY THEY CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO DO IT ALL ALONE OR EVEN TO CARRY THE LION'S SHARE IN MOST CASES. OTHER SECTORS AND AGENCIES MUST TAKE THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY IN CONFRONTING MANY OF THESE PROBLEMS, AND WE EDUCATORS MUST SPEAK UP TO PREVENT THEM FROM COPPING OUT OR BLAMING US. BUT SOMEONE HAS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN CREATING THE NECESSARY PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATING THEIR EFFORTS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, AND I'M AFRAID I CAN'T SEE ANY

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INSTITUTION THAT IS BETTER PLACED TO DO THAT THAN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS. SO WHILE WE MUST NOT ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO BLAME OUR SCHOOLS FOR ALL OF ITS PROBLEMS, AND WHILE WE MUST INSIST THAT OTHERS BE REQUIRED TO BEAR THEIR PROPER SHARE OF THE BURDEN, WE PROBABLY SHOULDN'T STOP THERE; WE PROBABLY SHOULD RECOGNIZE A PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE SOME LEADERSHIP IN YOKING TOGETHER THE MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EXPERTISE REQUIRED TO ADDRESS THESE COMPLEX PROBLEMS, IF ONLY FOR THE SELFISH REASON THAT EDUCATORS WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO BE BLAMED FOR THEM ANYWAY. BUT THAT STILL LEAVES UNANSWERED THE QUESTION OF WHAT DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTION OUR SCHOOLS CAN APPROPRIATELY BE EXPECTED TO MAKE AS MEMBERS OF SUCH PARTNERSHIPS.

THIS, OF COURSE, IS THE CRUCIAL QUESTION UNDERLYING THE TITLE OF THIS CONFERENCE, "CURRICULUM AT THE CENTRE": WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO AND HOW SHOULD THEY DO IT? YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SUBSTANTIAL EFFORTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION IN RECENT YEARS. REPORTS HAVE ISSUED FROM COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES AND WORKING GROUPS IN ALMOST ALL OF OUR PROVINCES DURING THIS DECADE. THEY HAVE VARIED IN THE THOROUGHNESS OF THEIR PROCEDURES, IN THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THEIR SCOPE, AND IN THE RECEPTION OF THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS; BUT ALL HAVE REPRESENTED SERIOUS ATTEMPTS TO ANSWER THAT FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS. ONE WOULD THINK, THEN, THAT WE WOULD HAVE THE ANSWER BY NOW AND THAT IMPROVEMENTS WOULD BE EVIDENT IN DIRECTIONS THAT ARE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IF THAT IS THE CASE, IT IS NOT APPARENT TO ME AS A SOMEWHAT PERIPHERAL OBSERVER. I STILL PERCEIVE A SORT OF CONFUSION AND I SUSPECT THAT MANY OF YOU SENSE IT AS WELL.

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So how come?

In an attempt to answer that question, I took a look at a few of the reports from recent provincial reviews of education; and I ended up with two main observations. First, there seems to be a good deal of agreement among the reports from different provinces on principles underlying their recommendations. They all agree that we want our young people to grow up with the capability of living their lives in ways that are as productive as possible from society's point of view and as satisfying as possible from their own, that education is the most promising means to develop this capability, and that schools are the principal vehicle through which such education should be delivered. They all agree that we must provide learning opportunities in our schools that can develop that capability and that students must continue their formal education long enough for us to get the job done. They all agree that both the content and the process of what goes on in schools are fundamental to the success of education. More specifically, one finds in most of these reports the advocacy of such features as: multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches focussed on problems or themes or issues that are relevant to learners; a strong liberal education so that students will be prepared for productive and satisfying lives in our society as it will evolve, with minimal limitations and restrictions on their capacity to continue learning life-long; official bilingualism and multiculturalism (including heritage and ancestral languages); appreciating Canada's distinctiveness within a well understood global setting; co-op and other approaches to relating

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THOUGHT WITH ACTION, STUDY WITH WORK, AND SCHOOLS WITH COMMUNITIES; VARIETY AND FLEXIBILITY IN TEACHING APPROACHES AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO RECOGNIZE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG STUDENTS; EQUAL ACCESSIBILITY TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUALITY OF OUTCOMES; RECOGNITION AND ACCOMMODATION OF THE NEEDS OF AN INFORMATION SOCIETY - INCLUDING THE NEEDS TO THINK CREATIVELY AND CRITICALLY, TO COMMUNICATE ACCURATELY AND PERSUASIVELY, AND TO USE TECHNOLOGY SKILLFULLY AND IMAGINATIVELY; THE IMPORTANCE OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT, ETHICAL REASONING, AND VALUING; EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE RACISM, SEXISM, AND OTHER FORMS OF UNJUST DISCRIMINATION THROUGH LEARNING; ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE ACCORDING TO BOTH NORMS AND CRITERIA IN ORDER TO DETERMINE PROGRESS AND GUIDE TEACHING INTERVENTIONS WITHOUT LIMITING OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE; AND I COULD GO ON, BUT I DON'T NEED TO BECAUSE YOU'VE READ OR HEARD ALL THIS BEFORE, IN SEVERAL PLACES, AND MOST OF YOU PROBABLY AGREE WITH MUCH OF IT - AS I DO. THE CONSISTENCY WITH WHICH IT HAS BEEN EXPRESSED IS ENCOURAGING BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO REFLECT SOME KIND OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS AMONG THOSE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH EDUCATION IN CANADA.

MY SECOND OBSERVATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT WHILE THESE COMMITMENTS CAN FOSTER ENTHUSIASM (AT LEAST IN ME) THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT THEY GENERATE TYPICALLY DO NOT, AND WHILE THE COMMITMENTS SEEM QUITE CONSISTENT FROM ONE PART OF THE COUNTRY TO THE OTHER THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THEM VARY SUBSTANTIALLY AMONG PROVINCES. EACH OF THESE POINTS RAISES SOME QUESTIONS. IN REGARD TO THE LATTER, IF WE HAVE A REASONABLE CONSENSUS ACROSS THE

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COUNTRY ON WHAT OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD BE UP TO, WHY ARE THERE SUCH SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS AMONG PROVINCES IN HOW WE SHOULD GET THEM UP TO IT? COULD IT BE, POSSIBLY, THAT EACH PROVINCE, OR EACH CONSULTANT AND OFFICIAL THAT ADVISES IT, WANTS TO BE RECOGNIZED AS DISTINCTIVE? IS THIS CONSIDERABLE INTERPROVINCIAL VARIATION HELPFUL? IF SO, TO WHOM? I'LL COME BACK TO THESE QUESTIONS IN A MOMENT.

THE OTHER POINT I MENTIONED RAISES THE QUESTION OF WHY THE COMMONLY SHARED PRINCIPLES FOR ADVANCING EDUCATION ABOUT WHICH ONE CAN GET QUITE ENTHUSIASTIC END UP GENERATING RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE SO UNENTHUSING - RECOMMENDATIONS THAT I THINK ARE INCAPABLE OF REALLY IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES THAT SUPPOSEDLY UNDERLY THEM. WHEN WE KNOW WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO ACHIEVE, WHY CAN'T WE COME UP WITH MORE PROMISING WAYS TO ACHIEVE IT? THIS QUESTION IS, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE ESSENCE OF CURRICULUM THEORY. UNFORTUNATELY, I AM NOT AN EXPERT IN THAT FIELD AND, AS I TRIED TO SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THE LITERATURE, I BECAME CONFUSED BY THE NUMEROUS TECHNICAL TERMS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS THAT ARE REPLETE IN THE DEBATES ABOUT POSITIVISM, POST-POSTIVISM, POST-EMPIRICISM, CRITICAL THEORY, NONRATIONALISM, NON-FOUNDATIONALISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AND OTHER SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT THAT I HAVE NO DOUBT ARE ALL LEGITIMATE AND IMPORTANT. I DID MANAGE TO COME OUT OF IT, HOWEVER, WITH A PERSPECTIVE THAT I FOUND HELPFUL. IT IS ONE THAT I THINK IS ELEGANT IN ITS SIMPLICITY AND THAT MOST OF YOU WERE PROBABLY FAMILIAR WITH LONG BEFORE I DISCOVERED IT. IT HAS BEEN OFFERED BY A GROUP OF CONTEMPORARY CURRICULUM THEORISTS AND IT'S EFFECTIVELY PRESENTED IN A FASCINATING LITTLE BOOK CALLED <u>PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL SYSTEMS FOR A</u>

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NONRATIONAL WORLD (PATTERSON, PURKEY, AND PARKER; ASCD: 1986) BY THREE AUTHORS, ONE OF WHOM (JACKSON PARKER) IS TO SPEAK AT THIS CONFERENCE I AM PLEASED TO SEE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THEIR VIEWS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY CURRICULUM EXPERTS, BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE BEING DRAWN ON IN SOME JURISDICTIONS - INCLUDING THE CALGARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, I BELIEVE.

I DON'T WANT TO STEAL DR. PARKER'S "THUNDER," SO I WILL SIMPLY OUTLINE WHY I WAS ATTRACTED TO WHAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE TO SAY. AT THE RISK OF DOING THEM AN INJUSTICE, I BELIEVE THEY ARE SAYING THAT THE WORLD IN WHICH WE NOW LIVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AND IN WHICH OUR SCHOOLS MUST OPERATE, WORKS IN WAYS THAT CANNOT BE INTERPRETED OR PREDICTED RATIONALLY; IT IS, THEN, A NONRATIONAL WORLD (ALTHOUGH NOT AN IRRATIONAL ONE). THUS, AN ORGANIZATION WHICH INTERACTS CONSTANTLY AND INTIMATELY WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT, SUCH AS A SCHOOL OR SCHOOL SYSTEM, CANNOT DO SO PRODUCTIVELY ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF RATIONALITY. IT MUST, THEN, ADOPT A NONRATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL, WHICH THE AUTHORS CONTRAST WITH A RATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL AS FOLLOWS: SCHOOL SYSTEMS CAN NO LONGER BE GUIDED BY A SINGLE SET OF UNIFORM GOALS BUT MUST NECESSARILY BE GUIDED BY MULTIPLE AND SOMETIMES COMPETING SETS OF GOALS; POWER IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS SHOULD NO LONGER BE LOCATED AT THE TOP BUT MUST BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION; DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS CAN NO LONGER OPERATE AS A LOGICAL PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS THAT ARRIVES AT THE ONE BEST SOLUTION BUT MUST INEVITABLY BE A BARGAINING PROCESS TO ARRIVE AT SOLUTIONS THAT SATISFY A NUMBER OF CONSTITUENCI ES; THE PUBLIC CAN NO LONGER BE . .

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EXPECTED TO SUPPORT SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND INFLUENCE THEM IN PREDICTABLE AND MARGINAL WAYS BUT WILL LEGITIMATELY INFLUENCE SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN MAJOR WAYS THAT ARE SOMETIMES UNPREDICTABLE; AND THERE IS NO LONGER AGREEMENT ON ONE BEST WAY TO TEACH FOR MAXIMUM EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS BUT RECOGNITION THAT THERE ARE A VARIETY OF SITUATIONALLY APPROPRIATE WAYS TO TEACH WHICH ARE OPTIMALLY EFFECTIVE.

THIS CONSTITUTES, IT SEEMS TO ME, A DECEIVINGLY SIMPLE REDEFINITION OF THE SETTING IN WHICH WE LIVE AND YOU WORK, A MORE SENSIBLE AND LOGICAL WAY OF VIEWING CONTEMPORARY REALITY. BUT I DON'T THINK THAT MANY OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS HAVE MADE THAT ADJUSTMENT YET - OR IF THEY HAVE, SOME OF THOSE WRITING REPORTS OF RECENT EDUCATION REVIEWS IN CANADA DON'T REALIZE IT. THAT IS, WHILE THE CONSENSUS PRINCIPLES FOR EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT IN THE REPORTS ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE NEEDS OF OUR CONTEMPORARY, NONRATIONAL WORLD, THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION ASSUME THE CONTINUATION OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS ACCORDING TO A TRADITIONAL MODEL OF RATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. AS A RESULT, THE RECOMMENDATIONS SEEM INCAPABLE OF IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES AND ONE HAS A SENSE THAT MANY OF THEM CONSTITUTE LITTLE MORE THAN COSMETIC TINKERING WHICH WON'T SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THAT THE REVIEWS WERE INTENDED TO ADDRESS. NOW THIS IS TOO BROAD A GENERALIZATION TO BE FAIR TO THE MANY COMPETENT AND DEDICATED INVESTIGATORS WHO CONDUCTED THOSE REVIEWS, BUT IT IS NEVERTHELESS AN IMPRESSION THAT LEAVES ME WITH A CERTAIN SENSE OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND LOST OPPORTUNITY.

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The "Chaotic Garbage Cans" of Universities

How can we resolve this dilemma? How can we help to restructure our educational systems so that they more closely resemble the nonrational model of organizations? Short of a thoroughgoing and thoroughly upsetting reform, which I do not advocate, where can we look to find models of nonrational organizations that might help us adapt our schools and school systems to contemporary circumstances? We could look to successful private-sector corporations like McDonald's, Holiday Inns, or the 3M Company, as others have done. But I would suggest that we don't have to look that far afield.

I would submit that we have in our midst, within Canadian education itself, one of the most nonrational organizational forms that has ever existed - and that has survived, incidentally, for many centuries. I am referring to the university. If there was ever an institution designed to thrive on chaos, with an organizational model that resembles a garbage can, the university is it. Now I love universities and I apologize for indulging in my own fetish here, but I do believe that our schools and school systems could learn something from our institutions of higher education with respect to nonrationality. Let me emphasize that I would be the last to claim perfection for universities. They are rife with academic chauvinism, political games-playing, stalling tactics, and damaging jealousies (not to mention financial starvation), and they are almost impossible to administer. But I believe that they have adapted organizationally to the contemporary nonrational world better than many of our schools

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AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS HAVE YET MANAGED TO DO.

LET ME REMIND YOU OF A FEW FEATURES IN UNIVERSITIES WHICH I THINK ILLUSTRATE WHAT I HAVE SAID, AND AS I RUN THROUGH THESE FEATURES I'D LIKE YOU TO THINK ABOUT THEIR APPLICABILITY IN YOUR OWN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:

(1) WITH RESPECT TO <u>CURRICULUM DESIGN</u>, THOSE IN UNIVERSITIES BELIEVE THAT RECEIVED KNOWLEDGE EVOLVES (A BIG PART OF THEIR JOBS AS SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS IS TO MAKE SURE IT DOES), THEY BELIEVE THAT UNDERSTOOD TRUTH CHANGES, AND THAT LEARNING VARIES ACCORDING TO UNPREDICTABLE INTERACTIONS AT DIFFERENT TIMES AMONG INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS, CONTENT AND METHODS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS; THUS, WHAT THEY TRY TO TEACH IS HOW TO LEARN WITHIN A WORLD CHARACTERIZED BY INSTABILITY, UNCERTAINTY, AND NONRATIONALITY (ALTHOUGH I MUST ADMIT THAT THIS IS LESS SO IN OUR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS - INCLUDING EDUCATION - THAN IN OUR LIBERAL ARTS FACULTIES). CONSEQUENTLY, CURRICULUM BECOMES A <u>PROCESS</u> IN WHICH PROFESSOR AND STUDENT SHARE IN THE INQUIRY THROUGH WHICH LEARNING OCCURS. THERE IS A CONCENTRATION MORE ON HOW TO FIND THINGS OUT THAN ON PARTICULAR NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE THEMSELVES. THERE IS STRONG COMMITMENT TO A BROAD GENERAL OR LIBERAL EDUCATION AS A BASE TO BE SUPPLEMENTED BY OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE CHOSEN SUBJECTS IN DEPTH AND TO ENGAGE IN WORK-RELATED EXPERIENCES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES;

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AND WHILE THE EXTENT OF BREADTH AND DEPTH REQUIRED ARE SOMETIMES PRESCRIBED, THE SPECIFIC COMPONENTS FOR MEETING THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE DETERMINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN CONSULTATION WITH THEIR FACULTY ADVISORS AND ANYONE ELSE THEY WANT TO CONSULT WITH; ULTIMATELY, THEN, THE COHERENCE OF THEIR PROGRAMS IS AN INTERNALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY ESTABLISHED COHERENCE. (NOW, BEFORE I GO ON, LET ME GO BACK FOR A MOMENT TO THE SUBJECT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION BECAUSE I WANT TO RAISE A PARENTHETICAL CAUTION THAT I THINK APPLIES TO BOTH UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT, IN OUR FEAR THAT TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION WILL SQUEEZE OUT THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES, WE MAY BE OVER-CORRECTING BY CONCENTRATING TOO HARD ON EMPHASISING A LIBERAL EDUCATION. IT IS UNQUESTIONABLY ESSENTIAL AND WE MUST CONTINUE TO NOURISH AND FOSTER IT, BUT NOT AT THE COST OF UNDER-DOING TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION. WE ARE NOT YET MEETING THE HUMAN RESOURCE NEEDS FOR TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETENCE THAT OUR COUNTRY REQUIRES TO THRIVE (OR EVEN SURVIVE) IN THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY INTO WHICH WE ARE NOW LAUNCHED, FREE-TRADE BOOTS AND ALL. WE MUST NOT ALLOW OUR LEGITIMATE AND JUSTIFIABLE LOVE AFFAIR WITH LIBERAL EDUCATION TO BLIND US TO THE EQUALLY IMPORTANT ATTENTIONS OF OUR TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN SUITORS.)

(2) IN REGARD TO <u>INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES</u>, THERE IS A WIDE

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VARIETY OF TEACHING METHODS AND LEARNING SETTINGS, AND THE PACE OF PROGRESS IS LARGELY INDIVIDUALLY DETERMINED. CO-OP PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY AVAILABLE, REGARDLESS OF THE ACADEMIC-VS.-VOCATIONAL THRUST OF THE CURRICULAR PROGRAM IN WHICH A STUDENT IS ENGAGED. PROGRAMMING IS QUITE FLEXIBLE AND PERSONALIZED, AND IT INCLUDES STUDENT-INITIATED COURSES AND INDEPENDENT STUDY ACTIVITIES WITH CONSIDERABLE STUDENT CHOICE. THE LENGTH OF CLASS SESSIONS AND COURSES (FOR EXAMPLE, HALF-COURSES OR FULL-COURSES, SEMESTERED COURSES OR ACADEMIC YEAR COURSES) VARIES DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE SUBJECT, THE GOALS OF THE COURSE, AND THE AVAILABILITY OR CONSTRAINTS OF RESOURCES. WHILE MOST FACULTY MEMBERS HAVE "ACADEMIC HOMES" IN DISCIPLINE-BASED DEPARTMENTS, THEY ARE ENCOURAGED TO COOPERATE ACROSS DEPARTMENTAL BOUNDARIES IN ORDER TO DEVELOP INTERDISCIPLINARY AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS WHICH RESPOND TO CONTINUALLY CHANGING INTERESTS AND NEEDS, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TO THE INSTITUTION.

(3) RESPECTING <u>STUDENT EVALUATION</u>, THERE IS GENERAL (ALTHOUGH NOT UNIVERSAL) TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDIT AND SIMILARITY OF REQUIREMENTS ACROSS CANADA. TEACHERS SET THEIR OWN EXAMINATIONS, INDIVIDUALLY AND IN GROUPS, WITH THE RESULTING GRADES SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY

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INSTITUTION-WIDE BODIES OF PEERS. EXTERNALLY DEVELOPED STANDARDIZED TESTS MAY BE USED OCCASIONALLY FOR DIAGNOSTIC PURPOSES, AND IN SOME CASES FOR ORIGINAL DECISIONS ON ADMISSION (ESPECIALLY TO THE ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS), BUT THEY ARE NOT GENERALLY USED AS A BASIS FOR PASSING AND FAILING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. IN THE PROFESSIONAL AREAS, IT IS NORMALLY THE PROGRAMS THAT ARE EXTERNALLY EVALUATED AND PASSED OR FAILED, NOT THE STUDENTS; AND EVEN IN THE NON-PROFESSIONAL FIELDS, EXTERNAL REVIEWS ARE OFTEN EMPLOYED FOR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT.

(4) IN REFERENCE TO <u>STUDENT SERVICES</u>, THERE IS AN EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STUDENTS AS EQUALLY AS POSSIBLE, REGARDLESS OF AGE. THERE ARE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING STUDENTS AND PERIODIC HOMECOMINGS FOR GRADUATED STUDENTS. A FACULTY ADVISOR IS TYPICALLY ASSIGNED TO EACH STUDENT AND SPECIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE PROVIDED FOR THOSE WITH PARTICULAR NEEDS. THERE ARE HEALTH SERVICES AND COUNSELLING WITH TUTORIALS, REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITIES, REFRESHER COURSES, ASSISTANCE IN JOB PLACEMENT, AN EFFORT TO PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESS TO THE DISABLED AND OTHERWISE DISADVANTAGED (INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF CHILD CARE). THERE ARE CLIENT-RUN CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR MATURE, NATIVE, IMMIGRANT, AND OTHER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS OF

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STUDENTS. AND THERE IS INCREASINGLY COMPREHENSIVE, SOPHISTICATED DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMING DIRECTED TO THOSE IN SMALL, RURAL, AND NORTHERN COMMUNITIES.

(5) REGARDING STAFF DEVELOPMENT, TEACHER EVALUATION AND REWARD SYSTEMS ARE BASED ON PEER REVIEW WITH INPUT FROM STUDENTS AND OVERVIEW BY ADMINISTRATORS. THERE IS AN EXPECTATION THAT, IN ADDITION TO TEACHING AND RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY STAFF WILL ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE BY SHARING THEIR TIME AND APPLYING THEIR EXPERTISE TO HELP RESOLVE PROBLEMS EXTERNAL TO THEIR OWN INSTITUTIONS IN THE INTEREST OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR SOCIETY GENERALLY. PROVISION IS MADE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES SO THAT FACULTY MEMBERS CAN INTERACT WITH COLLEAGUES TO ENLARGE THEIR KNOWLEDGE, INCREASE THEIR UNDERSTANDING, REFLECT ON THEIR PRACTICE, AND IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE. AND SABBATICAL LEAVES ARE AWARDED PERIODICALLY SO THAT PROFESSORS CAN CONTRIBUTE NEW INSIGHTS CONCERNING THEIR WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF COLLEAGUES IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS.

(6) IN CONNECTION WITH GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING, AND UNDERLYING ALL THE REST, IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT UNIVERSITIES AS FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE "CHAOTIC GARBAGE CANS" THAT CANNOT BE RUN ACCORDING TO THE TYPICAL RULES AND EXPECTATIONS OF HIERARCHICAL BUREAUCRACIES; RATHER, THEY MUST BE VIEWED AS CULTURAL

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ENTITIES IN WHICH BEHAVIOUR IS GOVERNED BY SUCH PRINCIPLES AS ACADEMIC FREEDOM, RIGOUR OF THOUGHT, AND PEER REVIEW RATHER THAN BY ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION AND STRUCTURED AUTHORITY. THUS, PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IS FUNDAMENTAL AND EXTENSIVE AND, IN ORDER TO PERMIT THIS TO WORK, THE INSTITUTIONS AND MOST OF THE UNITS WITHIN THEM ARE GRANTED A GREAT DEAL OF AUTONOMY (INCLUDING CONSIDERABLE BUDGETARY INDEPENDENCE) TO DECIDE WHAT THEY WILL DO AND HOW THEY WILL DO IT WITH MINIMAL GOVERNMENTAL REGULATION, UNDER THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF ACADEMIC SENATES AND BOARDS OF GOVERNORS.

WELL, THERE IS MUCH MORE TO UNIVERSITIES THAN THAT LITTLE SUMMARY, BUT IT IS SUFFICIENT TO SUGGEST SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY OPERATE AS NONRATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, WAYS THAT MIGHT BE ADAPTED TO THE SCHOOL SETTING (AND IN CERTAIN CASES HAVE BEEN) IN ORDER TO PERMIT A GREATER LIKELIHOOD THAT THE PRINCIPLES FOR EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT ON WHICH THERE SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERABLE CONSENSUS ACROSS THE COUNTRY CAN, IN FACT, BE IMPLEMENTED.

NOW LET ME SAY ONCE AGAIN THAT I AM DEFINITELY NOT TOUTING UNIVERSITIES AS IDEALS TO BE EMULATED. THEY ARE TOO MESSY AND PROBLEMATIC FOR THAT; THEY CONSTITUTE ORGANIZED ANARCHY, BUT FOR THAT VERY REASON THEY SEEM SOMEWHAT BETTER ADAPTED TO OUR NONRATIONAL WORLD THAN MOST SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN THIS COUNTRY (WITH SOME NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS THAT WE HAVE ALL ENCOUNTERED). ONE OF THE BY-PRODUCTS OF THIS ADAPTATION IS THAT UNIVERSITIES ARE EXTREMELY

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DIFFICULT TO ADMINISTER. BUT THE CHALLENGE OF TAKING ON DIFFICULT TASKS CAN BE REWARDING AND ENJOYABLE IN ITSELF, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR ME - AT LEAST SO FAR. AND THAT IS WHY I HAVE ENTITLED THIS PRESENTATION "WHY SHOULD UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALL THE FUN?" I'D LIKE TO SEE MORE OF MY COLLEAGUES IN THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS GET IN ON IT TOO.

SOME QUESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

NOW WE COME TO THE CRUNCH. IS IT REALLY POSSIBLE, OR EVEN DESIRABLE, FOR OUR INSTITUTIONS OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION TO BE ORGANIZED MORE LIKE OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INCREASING THEIR AUTONOMY FROM GOVERNMENTS, THEIR INDEPENDENCE TO MAKE EDUCATIONAL DECISIONS BASED ON PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT SUBJECT TO PEER REVIEW, AND THEIR FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND TO LOCAL NEEDS AND DEMANDS? MY PERSONAL VIEW, HAVING WORKED AT BOTH LEVELS, IS THAT IT IS DESIRABLE; BUT I AM NOT AS CONVINCED THAT IT IS POSSIBLE, AT LEAST ON A WIDESPREAD BASIS. TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, AND HERE I AM BROACHING ON BLASPHEMY FOR AN EDUCATOR, OUR PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR DEPARTMENTS OR MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION HAVE GOT TO LET GO - OR AT LEAST TO LOOSEN THE STRINGS SUBSTANTIALLY. I KNOW THAT SUCH A STATEMENT SMACKS OF HERESY, PARTICULARLY AT A CONFERENCE WHICH IS CO-SPONSORED BY OUR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, A BODY FOR WHICH I HAVE A LOT OF RESPECT BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW HOW IT CAN WORK AS WELL AS IT DOES UNDER THE STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS IT MUST ACCOMMODATE. BUT THERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT RESPONSIBLE EDUCATORS MUST ASK - AGAIN, SINCE I KNOW THEY HAVE BEEN ASKED MANY TIMES BEFORE:

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(1) WHY SHOULD EQUALLY ABLE FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLDS IN NEWFOUNDLAND, IN ONTARIO, AND IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (OR ANYWHERE ELSE) HAVE SO MUCH DIFFICULTY MOVING FROM A SCHOOL IN ONE PROVINCE TO A SCHOOL IN ANOTHER? WHY SHOULD THEIR PARENTS BE SO CONFUSED, AND CONCERNED, ABOUT SUCH AN ADJUSTMENT THAT THEY TOO OFTEN REJECT INTER-PROVINCIAL CAREER TRANSFERS FOR THAT REASON? WHAT DOES THIS DO TO THE FRAGILE UNITY OF OUR COUNTRY EXCEPT TO NOURISH THE ALREADY DYSFUNCTIONAL PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL CHAUVINISM THAT DIVIDES US? WHAT MAKES US THINK THAT THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND POLICY GUIDELINES NEEDED IN EDMONTON ARE MORE LIKE THOSE IN CAMROSE (ANOTHER ALBERTA UNIVERSITY TOWN) THAN LIKE THOSE IN HALIFAX? NOTWITHSTANDING CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS TO THE CONTRARY, I WOULD ARGUE THAT MOST OF OUR PROVINCES ARE JUST TOO LARGE AND TOO DIVERSE TO BE REALLY USEFUL AS THE PRIMARY SOURCES OF AUTHORITY IN SCHOOLING.

(2) WHY SHOULD OUR UNIVERSITIES BE TRUSTED BY PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN PROGRAMS, APPROACHES, AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS WHILE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS ARE NOT SO TRUSTED? ARE PROFESSORS ANY WISER IN THIS REGARD THAN TEACHERS? ARE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS AND DEANS (USUALLY TRAINED AS SCHOLARS RATHER THAN ADMINISTRATORS) BETTER QUALIFIED TO MANAGE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THAN ARE SCHOOL

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SUPERINTENDENTS AND PRINCIPALS? ARE BOARDS OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES ANY LESS WELL INFORMED, COMMITTED, OR CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR JURISDICTIONS THAN ARE UNIVERSITY BOARDS OF GOVERNORS? OF COURSE, THE STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SCHOOLS ARE YOUNGER AND REQUIRE MORE GUIDANCE THAN MOST OF THOSE IN UNIVERSITIES, BUT SURELY THAT'S NOT TRUE OF THE TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND BOARD MEMBERS.

(3) WHY SHOULD CANADA RISK THE INTERNATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT OF BEING SEEN AS NOT HAVING ITS NATIONAL ACT TOGETHER IN EDUCATION? WHEN A COUNTRY OF SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE CAN BE SPOKEN FOR WITH SOME CONFIDENCE BY A UNIFIED DELEGATION, OR EVEN A SINGLE OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON, WHAT MUST THE REST OF THE WORLD THINK WHEN A COUNTRY OF TWENTY-FIVE MILLION PEOPLE INSISTS ON PRESENTING ELEVEN DIFFERENT VOICES? ARE THE NATURE AND NEEDS OF EDUCATION REALLY ALL THAT DIFFERENT ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF OUR INVISIBLE BUT RATHER RIGID PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT EDUCATION HAS BECOME A SOMEWHAT HELPLESS AND SUFFERING PAWN IN THE UNIQUELY CANADIAN CHESS GAME BETWEEN FEDERALISM AND NATIONALISM - TO THE POTENTIAL AMUSEMENT AND CONFUSION OF THOSE IN OTHER NATIONS? CERTAINLY, MOST OF US SMARTED UNDER THE ADMONITION OF THE OECD REVIEW GROUP IN THE 1970'S TO THE EFFECT THAT CANADA AS A COUNTRY DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE MEANINGFUL GOALS IN EDUCATION. IT

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STILL DOESN'T.

NOW BEFORE I SELF-IMMOLATE UP HERE, BECAUSE MY SALARY DEPENDS EVEN MORE HEAVILY ON THE PROVINCIAL PURSE THAN MOST OF YOURS DO, LET ME EMPHASIZE THAT I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT EDUCATION SHOULD BE THE SAME ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. ON THE CONTRARY, THERE SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENTIATION. BUT THE DIFFERENCES SHOULD BE MORE FROM STUDENT TO STUDENT, FROM SCHOOL TO SCHOOL, AND FROM COMMUNITY TO COMMUNITY THAN THEY SHOULD BE FROM ONE DIVERSE AND VARIEGATED PROVINCE TO ANOTHER. AND LET ME POINT OUT AN IMPORTANT COROLLARY. WERE THE PROVINCES TO ACCORD SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER AUTONOMY TO LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS, AS THEY HAVE TO UNIVERSITIES, IT WOULD CORRESPONDINGLY NEED TO BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE PROVINCIAL BUREAUCRACIES OF OUR TEACHERS' FEDERATIONS AND TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATIONS WOULD THEMSELVES HAVE TO RELINQUISH SOME POWER AND CONTROL TO THE LOCAL LEVEL - AND PERHAPS TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL - AS WELL. SO THE FURTHER DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY THAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE, AT LEAST ON A TRIAL BASIS IN SOME PROVINCES, WOULD HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLY NEGOTIATED AMONG THE VARIOUS PARTNERS IN EDUCATION THAT ARE REPRESENTED AT THIS CONFERENCE. THIS WOULD ENTAIL RISK AND IT WOULD REQUIRE TRUST, BUT I HAVE WORKED IN AT LEAST TWO PROVINCES WHERE I BELIEVE THE WILLINGNESS TO RISK AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUST ARE ADEQUATE TO GIVE IT A CHANCE, AND I'D LIKE TO SEE IT TRIED. (IT MIGHT EVEN LEAD AS WELL, INCIDENTALLY, TO BETTER WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS, WHICH ARE BADLY NEEDED AND WOULD, I BELIEVE, BE BENEFICIAL TO BOTH SECTORS.)

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I'LL CONCLUDE BY ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WHAT I HAVE SAID I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MAY NOT WORK, IT MAY BE NAIVE, IT MAY ALREADY BE THERE, OR IT MAY BE UNWISE OR SIMPLY WRONG. BUT FROM WHERE I STAND ON THE PERIPHERY, IT SEEMS WORTH THINKING ABOUT AND I HOPE YOU'LL GIVE IT A BIT OF CONSIDERATION DURING YOUR DELIBERATIONS OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS. CANADIAN EDUCATION IS IN THE PUBLIC EYE NOW TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST QUARTER-CENTURY. WE ARE A PRIORITY CONCERN OF GOVERNMENTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, EVEN THOUGH OUR FUNDING MAY NOT SHOW IT. IF WE HAVE EVER HAD A CHANCE TO REALLY ACHIEVE SOMETHING THAT WE CONSIDER VALUABLE AS PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS, NOW IS THE TIME TO GO FOR IT. YOU HAVE A TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY AT THIS REMARKABLE CONFERENCE TO TAKE SOME REALLY POSITIVE STEPS IN THAT DIRECTION AS YOU EXAMINE THE REALITIES, RESPONSES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES PERTAINING TO CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND LEADERSHIP IN CANADIAN EDUCATION. I HOPE THAT MY REMARKS HAVE BEEN OF SOME USE IN GETTING YOU STARTED, AND I WISH YOU ALL A VERY SUCCESSFUL AND ENJOYABLE CONFERENCE. AS FOR ME, I MUST NOW HURRY BACK TO THE UNIVERSITY AND HAVE SOME MORE FUN.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION.